

UPTIGHT

Bob tightens the nuts
down onto the clamps.
He is grunting and grimacing,
his biceps straining
and his back nearly wrenching out
as he turns red and tugs on a 2-foot-long crescent wrench,
digging his bootheels into the concrete floor.
He gets out a 4-foot-long section of steel pipe
and slips it over the crescent wrench,
grabbing the pipe with both hands as if it were an oar,
leaning back,
giving 4 final tugs
that make the nuts and bolts creak
as if they are about to snap.

The slab of aluminum he must cut is now anchored
to the machine table with more than twice the torque
required to keep extremely hard heat-treated
tool steel
from moving under the force of cutting.

Bob doesn't want that son of a bitch
on night shift
to think that he can tighten nuts
tighter than Bob can.

T.G.I.F

After work each Friday
the workers celebrate the end of the workweek
by rushing to their cars
and throwing open the doors,
denting the doors of the cars next to them,
the drivers of the dented cars
climbing out
and kicking dents into the offenders' doors.
The workers who make it out of the parking lot right away
rear-end
and sideswipe each other in the street,
and keep on going,
cursing and shaking fists and revving their engines
and jockeying for position
to get to the boulevard —
terrorizing and periodically running over
any workers foolish enough to forego cars
and attempt to cross the street on foot
to get to the buses.

— Fred Voss

Long Beach CA